

### ABSTRACT

Methods for forming dielectric layers over polysilicon substrates, useful in the construction of capacitors and other semiconductor circuit components are provided. A self-limiting nitric oxide (NO) anneal of a polysilicon layer such as an HSG polysilicon capacitor electrode, at less than 800°C., is utilized to grow a thin oxide (oxynitride) layer of about 40 angstroms or less over the polysilicon layer. The NO anneal provides a nitrogen layer at the polysilicon-oxide interface that limits further oxidation of the polysilicon layer and growth of the oxide layer. The oxide layer is exposed to a nitrogen-containing gas to nitridize the surface of the oxide layer and reduce the effective dielectric constant of the oxide layer. The process is particularly useful in forming high K dielectric insulating layers such as tantalum pentoxide over polysilicon. The nitridized oxynitride layer inhibits oxidation of the underlying polysilicon layer in a post-treatment oxidizing anneal of the high K dielectric, thus maintaining the oxide layer as a thin layer over the polysilicon layer.

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